

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

for the Term Grazing Permit Renewal for Authorization #2702980 on the Big Indian Creek and Middle Steptoe Grazing Allotments Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2011-0010-EA)

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI):

I have reviewed the Final Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2011-0010-EA. After consideration of the environmental effects as analyzed in the EA, and incorporated herein, I have determined that the proposed action associated with fully processing the term permit renewal subject to the management practices identified in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-NV-L010-2011-0010-EA has been reviewed through the interdisciplinary team process.

Rationale:

I have determined the proposed action is in conformance with the Ely District Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP) to manage the public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management's Ely District Office (August 20, 2008). This proposed term permit renewal would be effective in restoring rangeland health and watershed condition on public lands in the Big Indian Creek and Middle Steptoe allotments. Through sound livestock management practices, progression will be made towards achievement of Standards and conformance to the Guidelines for Grazing Administration.

This finding and conclusion of no significant impact is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context:

The proposed term permit renewal is located within the Steptoe Valley Watershed. This permit encompasses approximately 8,505 public lands acres. Authorization #2702980 is the only permittee on the Big Indian Creek and Middle Steptoe allotments. The Big Indian Creek and Middle Steptoe allotments are located within White Pine County, Nevada. Big Indian Creek and Middle Steptoe allotments are both located approximately between 20 miles north of Ely, NV. White Pine County is sparsely populated. Although the acreage involved is somewhat extensive, impacts from livestock grazing are dispersed, and compatible with the rural, agricultural setting throughout most of the area.

Intensity:

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The Environmental Assessment has considered both beneficial and adverse impacts of the proposed action. None of the impacts considered in the EA approach the threshold of significance, i.e. exceeding air or drinking water quality standards, contributing to a decline in the population of a listed species, etc. In other words, none of the resource impacts are intensely adverse or beneficial.

2) *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

The Proposed Action would not result in potentially substantial or adverse impacts to public health and safety.

3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The Ely RMP EIS has evaluated the impacts of livestock grazing on natural resources and unique geographic characteristics found on public lands throughout the district, and decisions were made to eliminate grazing in areas where the impacts could cause unacceptable degradation to natural resources and unique geographic characteristics. No site specific concerns were identified in the EA.

4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

Whereas it may be controversial to continue to permit livestock grazing on public lands in spite of the effects, there is little controversy as to what they are. The Ely RMP EIS analyzed several alternatives with various effects to conflicting uses of natural resources and disclosed the effects. Decisions were made to continue livestock grazing in areas deemed appropriate.

5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The effects of livestock grazing are well known and documented. Management practices are employed to meet resource objectives and maintain or achieve rangeland health. The Ely RMP EIS analyzed the effects of livestock grazing throughout the district and has eliminated grazing in areas where unique environmental risks could occur.

6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The Proposed Action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Renewing the grazing permit does not establish a precedent for other Rangeland Health Assessments and Decisions. Any future actions or projects within the area or in surrounding areas will be analyzed and evaluated on their own merits and would be implemented or not, independent of the actions currently selected.

7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.*

No significant cumulative impacts have been identified in the EA. Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the cumulative impact assessment area would not result in cumulatively significant impacts. For any actions that may be proposed in the future, further environmental analysis, including the assessment of cumulative impacts, would be required.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

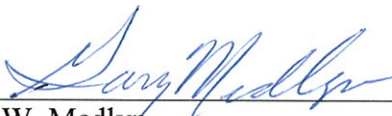
Districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were identified in the project area and considered in the EA. The proposed action will not cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.*


The BLM is required by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, to ensure that no action on the public lands jeopardizes a threatened, endangered, or proposed species. Threatened, Endangered, or Proposed species are not known to be present in the project area.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.



Gary W. Medlyn
Field Manager
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Date